



News Release

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UDOH Celebrates Anniversaries of Health Insurance Programs 78,000 Utahns Served

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – This summer, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) celebrates the anniversaries of Utah's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the Primary Care Network (PCN). Over the past five years, these innovative programs have covered nearly 78,000 Utahns who would otherwise go without health insurance.

CHIP is now five years old in Utah, as are many kids who are eligible for CHIP. Today the UDOH begins a statewide media campaign to inform families with uninsured but eligible children that applications for CHIP will be accepted during Open Enrollment, July 28 through August 1, 2003. The campaign features some of Utah's own kids and parents who have benefited from CHIP. For more information about CHIP call 1-877-KIDS-NOW or visit www.health.utah.gov/chip.

"CHIP has matured since 1998. In the first year of the program, just under 11,000 children were enrolled. In the past five years, CHIP has provided health insurance for more than 61,000 Utah children and currently, nearly 24,000 children are enrolled," says Rod Betit, Executive Director, UDOH. When CHIP began in 1998, the UDOH expected to serve 21,000 children at one time. This expectation has been exceeded, today CHIP is able to enroll 28,000 children.

According to the 1996 UDOH Health Status Survey, 8.6 percent of Utah kids (age 17 and under) lacked health insurance. When this survey was repeated in 2001, only 6.8 percent of kids (age 17 and under) were uninsured. CHIP has made contributions to the reduction in the uninsured rate over the last several years.

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One year ago, the UDOH launched a new program, the PCN. This program has already enrolled nearly 17,000 Utah adults who would otherwise go without health insurance. PCN provides preventive health care benefits for Utah adults who qualify based on age and income. This spring, the UDOH announced an innovative solution for working Utahns who can't afford their employers' health plan. The PCN Covered at Work program, a component of PCN, is an insurance premium reimbursement program for adults who qualify. Employer, employee, and state funds will be combined to purchase private health insurance for up to 6,000 working Utahns who enroll. The UDOH expects to begin accepting applications for PCN Covered at Work in August.

PCN, created and administered by the UDOH, was made possible through a Federal Medicaid 1115 waiver approved in January of 2002 by Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson. Utah is the only state with federal authority to implement this type of innovative health care benefit. Governor Leavitt has aggressively supported this effort.

Approximately 199,000 Utahns, or 8.7 percent of the population lacks health insurance coverage, according to the 2001 UDOH Health Status Survey. About 145,000 of these individuals are adults. A goal of PCN, is to reduce the number of uninsured working adults ages 18-64 by about 25,000, or 16.5 percent.

Editors Note: Enrollment data for CHIP and PCN can be found at www.health.utah.gov/chip

Interview opportunities are available with health officials and Utah CHIP families upon request.

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